

A STUDY ON PROBLEMS FACED BY RESIDENTS AND THEIR SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED TOURIST DESTINATIONS OF TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

Tourism plays a vital role in economic development and destination growth; however, its rapid expansion often creates challenges for host communities. This study examines the problems faced by residents and their support for sustainable tourism development in selected tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu, namely Ooty, Kodaikanal, Chennai, Mahabalipuram, and Madurai. Primary data were collected from 525 residents using a structured questionnaire, and the analysis employed descriptive statistics and Friedman's test. The findings reveal that overcrowding, waste accumulation, traffic congestion, rising cost of living, and social issues are the most significant problems experienced by residents. Despite these challenges, residents generally support tourism development, particularly when it benefits local communities and is supported by sustainable infrastructure investment. The study confirms that residents' support for future tourism development is conditional and closely linked to effective management of tourism-related problems. The findings highlight the importance of inclusive planning and sustainable tourism practices to ensure long-term destination sustainability.

Key Words: Community Support, Problems Faced by Residents and Residents' Perceptions.

1.1 Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing industries across the world and has become a vital contributor to economic development, employment generation, and regional transformation. In developing countries like India, tourism is not merely a leisure-oriented activity but a powerful tool for income generation, infrastructure development, cultural exchange, and destination promotion. The tourism sector contributes significantly to national and state economies by attracting domestic and international tourists and stimulating allied industries such as hospitality,

transport, handicrafts, and food services. At the same time, the rapid expansion of tourism has raised serious concerns regarding its impact on host communities, particularly residents living in major tourist destinations. Residents are the primary stakeholders in tourism development, as they directly experience both its benefits and its adverse consequences. While tourism provides employment opportunities, improves infrastructure facilities, and enhances market access for local products, it also creates several challenges that affect residents' quality of life. Problems such as overcrowding, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, waste accumulation, rising cost of living, pressure on public services, and changes in social and cultural practices are commonly observed in tourist destinations. These issues tend to intensify in areas with limited carrying capacity and inadequate planning, leading to resident dissatisfaction, social tensions, and resistance toward further tourism growth.

Tourism literature strongly emphasizes that residents' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. Social Exchange Theory suggests that residents evaluate tourism development by comparing its perceived benefits and costs. When tourism generates economic and social benefits that outweigh negative impacts, residents tend to support tourism initiatives. However, when tourism results in excessive congestion, environmental degradation, and social disturbances, residents develop unfavourable attitudes and withdraw their support. Hence, understanding residents' problems and their willingness to support future tourism development is essential for formulating balanced and sustainable tourism policies. Tamil Nadu is one of the most prominent tourism states in India, attracting a large volume of domestic and international tourists every year. The state offers diverse attractions such as hill stations like Ooty and Kodaikanal, heritage sites like Mahabalipuram, temple cities such as Madurai, and metropolitan tourism centres like Chennai. While tourism has significantly contributed to the economic growth of the state, it has also placed increasing pressure on local communities and natural resources. Residents in major tourist destinations frequently report problems related to overcrowded public spaces, traffic and parking congestion, waste management issues, rising housing costs, and disturbances to daily life.

Despite the importance of tourism in Tamil Nadu, empirical studies focusing simultaneously on residents' problems and their support for future tourism development across multiple destinations remain limited. Many earlier studies have concentrated primarily on economic benefits or have examined individual destinations in isolation. Moreover, residents' voices are often inadequately represented in tourism planning and decision-making processes, which can undermine social sustainability and long-term destination viability. In this context, the present study examines the

problems faced by residents and their support for future tourism development in selected tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu. By adopting a resident-centric approach, the study provides valuable insights for promoting inclusive, participatory, and sustainable tourism development that balances economic growth with community welfare and environmental protection.

1.2 Review of Literature

Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, and Vogt (2005) analyzed residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and identified major problems such as crowding, environmental degradation, and strain on public services. The study found that these problems significantly influence residents' quality of life and attitudes toward tourism development. It emphasized that residents' support for future tourism initiatives depends on how effectively these problems are addressed. The study is particularly relevant to the present research, as it highlights the importance of balancing tourism growth with community welfare. In Tamil Nadu tourist destinations, where infrastructure limitations are common, this study provides valuable insights into residents' concerns and support mechanisms.

Ap (1992) applied Social Exchange Theory to examine residents' perceptions of tourism development and the problems faced by host communities. The study explained that residents evaluate tourism based on a comparison of perceived benefits and costs. When tourism leads to problems such as overcrowding, increased cost of living, environmental degradation, and social disturbance, residents develop negative attitudes toward tourism. The study highlighted that lack of resident participation in tourism planning intensifies dissatisfaction and resistance. These findings are highly relevant to tourist destinations in Tamil Nadu, where residents often experience congestion, pressure on public services, and rising prices due to tourism activities. Ap's study further emphasized that residents are more likely to support future tourism development when negative impacts are minimized and benefits are equitably distributed. This study provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing both the problems faced by residents and their willingness to support future tourism initiatives in the present research.

Chandralal (2010) examined residents' support for tourism development by focusing on perceived problems and community benefits. The study found that residents express strong support for future tourism when tourism-related problems such as congestion, environmental damage, and cultural disruption are effectively managed. The study emphasized the importance of participatory planning and transparent governance. This research is particularly relevant to Tamil Nadu tourist destinations, where community involvement in tourism planning remains limited. The study

contributes to the present research by reinforcing that addressing residents' problems is a prerequisite for sustainable tourism development and long-term community support.

Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, and Carter (2007) examined residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and identified several problems faced by host communities, including congestion, rising living costs, environmental pollution, and pressure on public infrastructure. The study found that these problems significantly influence residents' attitudes toward tourism development. Residents who experienced frequent disturbances in daily life expressed dissatisfaction and resistance to further tourism growth. However, the study also emphasized that residents are willing to support future tourism development when effective planning mechanisms are implemented to control negative impacts. This research is highly relevant to Tamil Nadu tourist destinations, where tourism-induced congestion and infrastructure stress are common concerns. The study supports the present research by demonstrating that managing tourism-related problems is essential for sustaining residents' support and achieving long-term tourism development.

Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) examined factors influencing residents' support for tourism development and found that perceived problems such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and overcrowding negatively affect community attitudes. The study applied Social Exchange Theory and emphasized that residents support tourism only when benefits outweigh perceived costs. It further highlighted that effective management of tourism-related problems strengthens residents' willingness to support future development. This study is highly relevant to the present research, as it provides a theoretical basis for examining residents' support for tourism in Tamil Nadu tourist destinations, where residents frequently evaluate tourism based on its impact on daily life.

Kuvan and Akan (2005) examined residents' attitudes toward tourism development in developing destinations and identified several problems such as environmental degradation, noise pollution, and social conflicts. The study found that residents' support for tourism decreases when these problems are not addressed. However, the study also emphasized that residents remain supportive of tourism when they perceive effective management and long-term benefits. This research is applicable to Tamil Nadu tourist destinations, where similar challenges affect residents' daily lives. The study supports the present research by linking problem mitigation with residents' willingness to support future tourism development.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Tourism has emerged as a major contributor to economic development and destination promotion in Tamil Nadu, generating employment, income, and infrastructure growth. However, the

rapid expansion of tourism has also created several challenges for residents living in major tourist destinations. Increased tourist inflow has led to problems such as overcrowding, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, waste accumulation, rising cost of living, and pressure on local resources. In many areas, residents experience disruptions to daily life and changes in traditional social and cultural practices. While tourism continues to grow, the concerns and problems faced by host communities often remain underrepresented in tourism planning and policy formulation. Moreover, residents' support for future tourism development depends largely on how they perceive these problems and whether tourism contributes positively to their quality of life. In Tamil Nadu, limited systematic research has examined residents' problems and their willingness to support continued tourism development across diverse destinations. Hence, this study seeks to identify the problems faced by residents in selected tourist destinations and to explore their level of support for future tourism development.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its focus on residents, the primary stakeholders directly affected by tourism development. By identifying the problems faced by residents in selected tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers and planners to address issues such as overcrowding, environmental stress, and social disruption. Examining residents' support for future tourism development is essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Academically, the study contributes to tourism impact literature by linking residents' problems with their attitudes toward tourism, supporting social exchange theory. Practically, it promotes community-friendly tourism practices that enhance resident satisfaction and long-term sustainability.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to identifying the problems faced by residents and assessing their support for future tourism development in five selected tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu - Ooty, Kodaikanal, Chennai, Mahabalipuram, and Madurai. The study focuses on residents' perceptions of tourism-related issues such as environmental degradation, congestion, rising living costs, and social disturbances. It also examines residents' attitudes toward continued and future tourism development. The research is based on primary data collected from residents using structured questionnaires and supported by secondary sources. The findings are confined to selected destinations and resident perspectives only.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

- ☉ To identify the problems faced by residents in the selected tourist destinations in Tamil Nadu due to tourism.
- ☉ To explore residents' support for future tourism development.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Empirical research has been conducted under the survey method to fulfil the research objectives. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect the required data from the respondents.

1.7.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire covers the demographic characteristics of respondents, the problems faced by residents and residents' support for future tourism development.

1.7.2 Sampling Framework

In this study, the target population is the residents of selected tourist destinations in Tamil Nadu, namely Ooty, Kodaikanal, Chennai, Mahabalipuram, and Madurai. The sample size was determined by Smith's (1983) formula:

$$n = \left[\frac{Z\sigma}{E} \right]^2$$

Where:

Z = Z Statistics at 5% level;

σ = Standard Deviation for the result of the pilot study;

E = Margin of Error

The sample size calculation for the present study is given below.

$$n = \frac{1.96 \times 0.57}{0.05} = 499$$

Accordingly, the minimum required sample size was 499 respondents. To ensure adequate representation, a total of 550 residents (110 from each study area) were selected under a non-probability based convenient sampling method, as respondents were dispersed across different localities. This method is appropriate for the qualitative nature of the study.

Out of 550 questionnaires distributed, 525 responses were found valid and suitable for analysis. The area-wise sample distribution is presented in Exhibit 1.

Table No – 1 Sample Size

Study Area	No. of Respondents	No. of Responses considered
Ooty	110	106
Kodaikanal	110	104
Chennai	110	108
Mahabalipuram	110	102
Madurai	110	105
Total	550	525

1.8 Statistical Tools Used

- ☉ Descriptive statistics were used to present the demographic profile of residents in the tourist destinations.
- ☉ Friedman's Test was employed to rank the variables related to the problems faced by residents of tourist destinations and their support for sustainable tourism development.

1.9 Demographic Profile of Residents in Tourist Destinations

This section presents a detailed analysis of the demographic profile of residents living in the selected tourist destinations. By examining these demographic variables, the study seeks to identify patterns that may explain variations in residents' attitudes toward tourism and its long-term development in the region.

Table No – 2 Demographic Profiles of Residents in Tourist Destinations

Category	Description	Frequency (N = 525)	%
Gender	Male	321	61.1
	Female	204	38.9
Age (<i>in years</i>)	< 30	124	23.6
	31 – 40	151	28.8
	41 – 50	171	32.6
	51 and above	79	15.0
Educational	Upto Secondary School Level	122	23.2

Category	Description	Frequency (N = 525)	%
Qualification	Higher Secondary/Diploma	237	45.1
	Graduate	166	31.6
Occupation	Tourism-related (e.g., hotel staff, guide, vendor)	70	13.3
	Non-tourism related (e.g., agriculture, government service)	199	37.9
	Unemployed/Retired/Student	256	48.8
Monthly Household Income (in ₹)	< 15,000	102	19.4
	15,001 – 25,000	239	45.5
	25,001 – 50,000	140	26.7
	50,001 – 75,000	44	8.4
	> 75,000	-	-
Years of Residence in the Destination	< 5 years	59	11.2
	5 – 10 years	97	18.5
	11 – 20 years	115	21.9
	> 20 years	254	48.4

Source: Primary Data

1.10 Problems Faced by the Residents of Tourist Destinations

While tourism generates substantial economic and social benefits for destination communities, it also brings a range of challenges that can affect residents' daily lives and overall satisfaction. Issues such as overcrowding, rising living costs, environmental degradation, traffic congestion, noise, and changes in community behaviour often emerge as by-products of tourism growth. Understanding the nature and intensity of these problems from the residents' perspective is crucial for developing strategies that ensure tourism remains socially sustainable and community-oriented. In this section, the Friedman test was employed to rank and compare the various problems faced by residents in tourist destinations. This non-parametric test helped to identify the most pressing issues by analysing mean rank differences across multiple related variables. Through this approach, the study aimed to determine which aspects of tourism development were perceived as most problematic whether economic, environmental, social, or infrastructural in nature.

Table No – 3 Problems Faced by the Residents of Tourist Destinations

Statements	Mean Rank
Tourism development increases traffic and parking problems.	4.02
Tourism results in more litter and waste.	4.14
Tourism causes overcrowding in public spaces.	4.40
Tourism-related jobs offer low and unstable wages.	3.58
Tourism increases property taxes and cost of living.	3.99
Tourism may contribute to increased crime or social issues.	4.26
Tourism creates friction between residents and tourists.	3.61
χ^2	72.983
P.	.000

Source: Computer from Primary Data

The Friedman's test was conducted to examine the problems faced by residents living in tourist destinations. The test produced a chi-square (χ^2) value of 72.983 with a significance level of $p = .000$, indicating that there were statistically significant differences among the issues identified by the respondents. This result suggested that the residents did not experience all problems equally; rather, certain issues were perceived as more severe than others. Based on the mean rank values, the most pressing concern among residents was that tourism causes overcrowding in public spaces (mean rank = 4.40). This finding reflects the growing pressure of tourist influx on local amenities,

public areas, and daily routines, leading to congestion and discomfort for the local population. The second major problem identified was that tourism may contribute to increased crime or social issues (mean rank = 4.26), suggesting that rapid and unmanaged tourism growth can sometimes lead to security challenges and social disturbances within host communities. Similarly, tourism results in more litter and waste (mean rank = 4.14) ranked high among residents' concerns, highlighting environmental degradation and poor waste management as direct consequences of increased tourist activity. Another significant issue was that tourism development increases traffic and parking problems (mean rank = 4.02), indicating that tourism places additional strain on existing infrastructure and disrupts the daily mobility of residents. The rise in property taxes and cost of living (mean rank = 3.99) was also a notable problem, as tourism-driven demand for housing and services tends to inflate local prices, making living conditions more expensive for residents.

On the other hand, issues such as tourism-related jobs offering low and unstable wages (mean rank = 3.58) and friction between residents and tourists (mean rank = 3.61) were comparatively less severe but still significant. These findings suggest that while economic opportunities arise from tourism, they often come with limited financial stability and occasional social tensions. The analysis revealed that overcrowding, increased crime, waste accumulation, and traffic congestion were the most critical issues faced by residents of tourist destinations. Meanwhile, economic and social concerns such as low wages and resident-tourist conflicts were secondary but notable. The results underscore the need for sustainable tourism management, including improved infrastructure, community safety measures, waste control systems, and equitable economic policies to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on local communities while preserving its benefits.

1.11 Residents' Support for Sustainable Tourism Development

Residents' support plays a pivotal role in determining the long-term sustainability and success of tourism development. The willingness of local communities to endorse tourism initiatives depends largely on how they perceive its overall impacts social, economic, and environmental. When tourism contributes positively to residents' quality of life and community well-being, they are more likely to support sustainable tourism practices. However, when negative consequences outweigh benefits, local opposition or indifference may emerge, affecting the destination's future growth and harmony. In this section, the Friedman test was applied to rank the various dimensions of residents' support for sustainable tourism development. By comparing mean ranks, the analysis identified which aspects of sustainability received the strongest and weakest levels of support from residents.

Table No – 4 Residents' Support for Sustainable Tourism Development

Statements	Mean Rank
I support the present level of tourism development in my area.	3.27
I support further tourism expansion if it benefits local communities.	3.35
The local community should be more involved in tourism planning.	2.63
The government should invest more in sustainable tourism infrastructure.	3.19
Tourism development should balance economic, social, and environmental goals.	2.56
χ^2	164.941
P.	.000

Source: Computer from Primary data

The Friedman's test was applied to assess the residents' support for sustainable tourism development in their local area. The test yielded a chi-square (χ^2) value of 164.941 with a significance level of $p = .000$, indicating that there were statistically significant differences among residents' responses to the various statements. This result implies that residents differed in the extent of their agreement toward different aspects of sustainable tourism development. Among the statements, the highest mean rank was recorded for "I support further tourism expansion if it benefits local communities" (mean rank = 3.35). This indicates that residents are generally open to continued tourism growth, provided it directly contributes to the welfare and development of local people. Similarly, the statement "I support the present level of tourism development in my area" (mean rank = 3.27) also received a relatively high score, suggesting that most residents are satisfied with the current scale of tourism activities but are cautious about unchecked expansion. The statement "The government should invest more in sustainable tourism infrastructure" (mean rank = 3.19) also ranked high, reflecting residents' recognition of the need for improved facilities and policies that promote environmentally responsible and community-oriented tourism. This implies a collective awareness of the importance of infrastructure that supports both economic growth and ecological conservation. On the other hand, lower mean ranks were observed for "The local community should be more involved in tourism planning" (mean rank = 2.63) and "Tourism development should balance economic, social, and environmental goals" (mean rank = 2.56). Although these mean ranks were comparatively lower, they still indicate a moderate level of agreement, suggesting that while residents value community participation and sustainable balance, these aspects may currently be underemphasized or under-implemented in local tourism policies. The findings reveal that residents generally support tourism development especially when it generates tangible local benefits and is backed by sustainable infrastructure investment. However, the relatively lower emphasis on community

involvement and holistic sustainability planning highlights a need for greater participatory governance and integrated policy frameworks. Promoting community engagement and balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities would strengthen residents' long-term support for sustainable tourism initiatives.

1.12 Research based Suggestion Suggestions

- ☉ The high ranking of overcrowding and congestion indicates the need for destination-specific carrying capacity assessments. Authorities should regulate tourist inflow through visitor caps, time-slot entry systems, and seasonal dispersion strategies to reduce pressure on public spaces and infrastructure.
- ☉ Since waste accumulation and environmental degradation emerged as major resident concerns, local bodies should invest in efficient waste segregation, recycling systems, and eco-friendly tourism practices. Strict enforcement of environmental regulations is essential to protect destination sustainability.
- ☉ To strengthen residents' support for future tourism development, policies should promote stable employment, skill development, and local entrepreneurship. Encouraging community-based tourism initiatives can ensure that economic benefits are fairly distributed among residents.

1.13 Conclusion

Tourism development in Tamil Nadu has generated significant economic and social benefits; however, it has also created multiple challenges that directly affect residents living in major tourist destinations. The findings of the study reveal that problems such as overcrowding, environmental pollution, waste accumulation, traffic congestion, and rising cost of living are the most pressing concerns faced by residents. These issues influence residents' perceptions and shape their attitudes toward tourism growth. Despite these challenges, residents generally support tourism development, particularly when it contributes to local welfare and is supported by sustainable infrastructure investment. The study confirms that residents' support for future tourism development is conditional and closely linked to how effectively tourism-related problems are managed. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, residents are more willing to support tourism when perceived benefits outweigh the costs. The results emphasize the importance of inclusive planning, environmental management, and equitable economic opportunities to sustain community support. Overall, the study underscores that sustainable tourism development in Tamil Nadu requires balancing economic growth with social well-being and environmental protection. Incorporating residents' perspectives into tourism policy

and planning is essential for achieving long-term destination sustainability and harmonious tourist–host relationships.

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